

1/14/59

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

APPVD BY V.PRES.OFFICE *Memorandum of Conversation*
1/16/59

LIMIT DISTRIBUTION

DATE: January 6, 1959

SUBJECT:

US-Soviet Relations

PARTICIPANTS: Richard M. Nixon, Vice President of the United States
Anastas I. Mikoyan, Deputy Premier of the Soviet Union
Mikhail A. Menshikov, Soviet Ambassador
Llewellyn E. Thompson, American Ambassador
Oleg A. Troyanovsky, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR
Edward L. Freers, Director, Office of Eastern European Affairs

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Mikoyan opened the conversation by saying that he brought greetings to the Vice President from Premier Khrushchev and added that the Soviets had been favorably impressed by the Vice President's speech in London. Observing the latter's office, Mikoyan commented that his was twice as large. The Vice President said that we did not think much of Vice Presidents here. Mikoyan replied that we were more democratic here.

Mikoyan said that he thought the political situation here was not easy for the administration in view of the Democratic control of Congress. He noted that our Constitution provided for a party in the minority to exercise rule and thus differed from other constitutions he knew, but he assumed that this would give the United States more stability.

The Vice President said that we operated on a bi-partisan basis on foreign policy but engaged in much controversy over domestic policy. For example, in 1948 President Truman, whose party had a minority in Congress at the time, was supported by an overwhelming bi-partisan vote on the Marshall Plan. In the area of foreign policy, Congress supported the President and the Secretary of State on major issues. He said that sometimes people outside the United States got the wrong impression about our unity because of our freedom of debate. Looking back on the past 25 years, his impression was that one would find increasing support for national policies rather than partisan policies. If this were not so, there would be a chaotic condition whenever the President was from one party and the majority of Congress from the other. All this did not mean that there were no hot arguments between us.

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Mikoyan said that, judging from the press, Americans liked argument. The Vice President said we preferred to work things out easily. Mikoyan replied, "Yes, you can do this among your own friends, but how can the two of us work our problems out?" The Vice President said this could be done better by talking than by fighting, and Mikoyan agreed that this would improve our relations.

The Vice President said that there were several areas of agreement between the American and Russian peoples and some of these were even reflected in the policies of our governments as well. He pointed out that Mikoyan had mentioned Khrushchev's comments about the speech he had made in London. He said this speech reflected the views of the great majority of the American people. They desired and preferred to use the resources of this country to win battles against disease, poverty and want, rather than any other battles between nations.

Mikoyan said this was a good platform for improvement of relations. But, he said, many prejudices stand in the way. If there were frequent meetings and contacts at all levels, only the real differences would remain and even these could then be solved through discussion.

The Vice President said that visits such as Mikoyan was making were useful. He was glad that Mikoyan would be able to see the United States and hoped that he would talk to important industrialists. They were not as bad as some people painted them. He was sure that Mikoyan would see great progress since the time of his last visit. The Vice President said that every visitor to the Soviet Union with whom he had talked -- Senator Humphrey, Eric Johnston and others -- had told him they had been impressed by three things. One was the progress that had been made in the USSR. Another was the determination to work and succeed, reflected by the Soviet people. The third was the friendly reception given to these visitors, not only by officials from whom it might be expected, but by everyone. The Vice President said he thought Mikoyan would find we were making progress here and that he, too, would meet a generally friendly reception. Certainly there would be nothing but the most friendly reception from the people as a whole. He would find among the American people great admiration for the achievements of the Soviet people in the scientific field. The "Lunik" that had gone on toward the sun had caught the imagination of the American people. He, for one, thought it was good to have this type of competition. Sometimes the Soviet Union might be first; other times the United States. It was the responsibility of those in government to find the means to share the benefits of this process. Economic progress of the world in general would provide ample room for healthy, friendly competition. This brought him to the point as to why there were problems that divide us. Some of these were due to lack of communication. This was a job for our Ambassadors, among others. At times, people did not get the right interpretation of motivations underlying actions. While there existed among the American people a tremendous admiration for the heroism of the Russian soldiers when we were Allies, our people expressed concern when they read statements which indicated a determination by the Soviet Union, through Communist organizations, to increase its influence and to overthrow governments around the world, including our own. This was not said in a critical sense but to show the impression that is made by these statements. The Vice President said he realized that speeches made here might have the same effect upon the Russians. If we were going to talk about peaceful competition it must be just that and not the use of economic power

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to extend influence.

Mikoyan said that he agreed to the last part of this statement but he said that Soviet intentions were erroneously interpreted. He asked if the Vice President considered their leadership intelligent. Mikoyan said they might make mistakes but they were intelligent. He did not say this with any inflated sense of pride, but said it objectively. In that case, how could the Soviet leaders hope to undermine the United States Government? They would be all Don Quixotes if they did. It was another matter that they felt that the internal processes working in capitalist countries should bring about communism. But that was an internal matter. The development of history occurred in a zig-zag fashion, but it was interesting to note that the richest countries were the least susceptible to communist influence. If de Gaulle had apprehensions about communist influence, Mikoyan could understand this since France had a big Communist Party. There was no basis at all for us to be concerned about a communist danger. Of course, the Soviet leaders' sympathies are on the side of communism, just as ours are on the side of capitalism. After all, we statesmen have our responsibility for governing our countries. Americans might say, "Well, what about Hungary?" There comes a time in history when action is necessary. They had an alliance with that government. They thought that American intelligence played a role in this affair. They didn't expect us to agree. They thought we wanted to divide and break up their bloc. They believed that a threat to their friends and allies was a threat to their own country. They had had to act, but they were sorry to have done so. If a communist government or any government hostile to the United States came into power in Mexico or Canada we would not stand aside. There is no use to mention examples. Of course, they would be glad if communism came to power in one country or another but it would never succeed if it relied on help from the outside. We must avoid fighting and even avoid propaganda. For instance, we had appropriated \$100,000,000 for activities against them. This was not bad for them, and the money had been lost. Their system was strong and even billions of dollars were not enough. After Stalin died they introduced many important reforms which have improved the situation. Of course, Stalin wanted their country to be strong, but his methods did not help. The Vice President interrupted to ask if he meant strong internally. Mikoyan said that he was referring to foreign policy and that here Stalin's line had been too inflexible. The present Soviet leaders had tried to change this policy and had not approved some of the ideas of Stalin but he had carried them through. In his old age, Stalin had not read much, nor had he met many people and he had become detached from life. The decisions he took therefore had no proper basis. The present leaders read a great deal, met more foreigners, and had the possibility of adopting decisions based on knowledge of the full facts. The Soviet people had endured so much suffering in the past that they had a right to a better life now. That is why their slogan was to catch up with America. This was not a menace. On the contrary, it admitted that America was ahead of the Soviet Union and it raised America's prestige. If the Soviet people lived better, what kind of threat was that to America? The Soviets did not want to flood the United States with

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goods. They wanted them for their own people. They were spending too much money on armaments -- though not as much as we were. This was money lost. It would be better in the future to turn these armaments into scrap iron, or still better not to produce them. The United States was increasing its military budget. This meant the Soviet Union must increase its budget. If the former decreased its expenditures for military purposes, the latter would do likewise.

The Vice President mentioned propaganda. He said Soviet propaganda differed from ours. The basic goal of our propaganda was to tell other countries honestly and frankly about the policies of the United States. He said he realized that the Soviet Union considered some of our broadcasts, as well as other types of propaganda activity, as devoted to interpreting internal Soviet policies and Soviet policies toward other countries. He personally doubted the usefulness of this and felt that it would be better for both sides to show restraint. He realized that sometimes speeches could be provocative and create positions and attitudes in other countries which would lead to fear and consequently to miscalculation. He said that we worried about this. If people wanted to change their form of government, this was their right. We accepted this and would not ourselves be here if we did not. The real problem was interference from the outside. Was he to understand from Mikoyan's remarks that the Soviet Union did not support Communist parties in other countries? He understood Mikoyan to say that they welcomed the advent of Communism but would do nothing overt to encourage or bring it about. The Vice President said that even since Stalin's death there had been indications that this was not, in fact, Soviet policy. During the past four years, students of Soviet affairs had believed that there had been considerable interference in internal affairs, in the case of some movements that had developed. He realized that the Soviet leaders pretended they did not do so; but just as people in the Soviet Union believed that there had been American activity in Hungary, so people here believed that the Soviet Union supported Communist parties in other countries. Perhaps this was all a carry-over from the past -- from the days of the Third International. The Soviet leaders should be realistic and recognize that this feeling existed. Here again, the Vice President said, the competition of ideas would be helpful -- but economic and political interference from outside would be objectionable.

Mikoyan said that what the Vice President described was something they did not do. The Cominform had been a detrimental development and had been abolished. Even under Stalin, it had begun to die away. They now had a firm policy of non-interference. They do not even try to interfere in nearby countries where Communist parties are in power. Of course, when their advice is asked they give it, but it is up to these other countries to act on it or not. For example, in the economic field, these countries often turned to the Soviet Union for advice since it was more experienced. It was glad to give advice. What was useful, these countries accepted. What not, they rejected. For example, a Korean delegation had come to discuss plans for rebuilding their devastated country. The Soviet leaders told them that it would be best to give priority to housing, rice cultivation, production of fertilizers, etc.; but not to building machines. They had seemed to agree. The Soviets had told them that machinery would be too expensive to produce. Since it was Soviet general practice to turn over the designs of machinery, etc., free of charge, the Koreans

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had said they wanted blueprints for a factory to make tractors. The Soviets had said they had no objections but there was not much point to this since the Koreans could not sell more than 2,000 tractors per year and it would be too expensive to produce this quantity. The Soviet Ambassador reported that the Koreans had been displeased and had decided to design the plant themselves. In view of this, the Soviet leaders decided to turn over the blueprints to the Koreans anyway.

Mikoyan continued with another example. He said that the Rumanians wanted to build an automobile plant. The Soviets told them that this was not practical. They said that it would be more profitable for the Czechs to produce these automobiles. The Rumanians could not produce more than five or six thousand a year and the automobiles would be too expensive. The Rumanians claimed that their national pride required them to go into this. They built the plant -- and the autos are expensive.

Ambassador Thompson said that he would like to revert to the Hungarian question. He said that when he was in Austria during the period of the Hungarian revolution, he was in a position to know what we did or did not do with regard to it. He said that from the very volume of our broadcasts some Hungarians believed that there was a chance we would support them. He assured Mikoyan that the United States had never had any intention of encouraging the fighting because it valued human life too much. It would not have stimulated resistance in the face of the odds in the situation. He did not believe that the Soviet Government had ever given the United States credit for the restraint it exercised during the Hungarian affair. We had been disturbed that something might break out in Poland at the same time. Hence, what activity we did engage in was designed to moderate the situation and reduce the toll of human life. The German Government had conducted an examination of our broadcast scripts in investigating charges made against broadcasts from facilities located on its territory. There were a few which we might have changed had we had it to do over, but very few. We believed that Khrushchev was right when he said that the Hungarian Government had been out of touch with its people. Our role had been minimal.

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Mikoyan said that he also believed that the main cause of the events in Hungary were the mistakes of the Communist leaders of Hungary. If that had not been the case, there would have been no basis for the fighting irrespective of any propaganda. The Soviet leaders believed that interference was bad for the side interfering and for the side being interfered with. But, of course, they wanted their camp to remain firm and they believed that they were now working for this much more intelligently and successfully. They did not want to undermine other countries and they did not want to set the United States at loggerheads with its allies. They realized that the United States was sensitive to its interests and that anything they might do which infringed on them would give rise to suspicion. They were conscious of American interests and their actions were not designed to arouse or evoke our sensibilities.

The Vice President said that this not only applied to actions but to words as well. When provocative statements were made, they had repercussions around the world. He realized that both sides were to blame. In order for the Soviet leaders to understand us and the feelings of our people, of Senators and Congressmen, they had to realize that the latter watched every word in the speeches of Khrushchev and Mikoyan and in PRAVDA statements. Where these were belligerent and aggressive in tone, they obviously had considerable effect here. All sides must be more temperate. We were playing not only with emotions but with instruments of destruction. None of us wanted to set these off.

Mikoyan agreed that this was very dangerous. Perhaps a new approach should be made. The Soviets believed that the Americans were more active in making provocative statements and he said that if the Soviets did so, it was not to remain in debt on the matter.

The Vice President replied that that is the way the process works. One side provokes the other.

The Vice President said that sometimes there are incidents which seem small but they have a great emotional effect. One such incident was that involving eleven missing American airmen. There was more concern felt about this by the average American than about such a thing as the conference on nuclear testing in Geneva even though the latter might be much more important in the long run. Mikoyan said that that was an unpleasant incident and was a misfortune, but the Soviet Union was not to blame. In order to avoid such incidents, it would be best for the planes to use safer routes, especially since these flights yielded nothing good. Planes flew over the Far East or over the Baltic area but they learned nothing new. All this territory had been photographed time and time again -- there were Scandinavian Air Lines planes coming in and out, Ambassador Thompson's plane came in and out -- the Soviet had nothing to hide.

The Vice President said his point was that with regard to reducing tension between us, it would be useful to make progress on matters like this. It would be helpful if the Soviet Government gave us an indication or a statement about what had happened to the men involved. Mikoyan replied that they had given all the information they had. There was no sense in their trying to hide anything. Why were the Americans so suspicious about this? The Vice President said that this was reflection of the times and that suspicions did arise. Mikoyan said that

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that this was true and that no cause should be given to arouse suspicions.

Mikoyan said he had the impression that in the last few months our relations had improved. The Soviet leaders had more confidence in us, though it was far from full confidence. Talks in Moscow with Stevenson, Lippman, Johnston, Humphrey, and others had made a real impression on the Soviet leaders. He said they could not all be false in their attitudes and that, therefore, something real must underlie their statements. Even the Vice President's statement in London had been something unusual. The Vice President said that we did agree on some objectives. Mikoyan remarked that the main thing was that the Soviet leaders did not want war but wanted peaceful co-existence. This was not because they were weak or were cowards. They wanted peace in order to develop their country and have it become rich like the United States. The Vice President said that the United States believed it was in the American interest for the Soviet Union to concentrate its economic resources on the progress and welfare of the Soviet people. There was no question that where economic health prevailed there was less likelihood for support of aggressive action and less feeling of a need for expansion. It was good for both the Soviet Union and the United States to have Asia, the Near East and South America embark on programs which would bring better life to the people there. This was what the Soviet Union wanted, Mikoyan said.

The Vice President said that no one in the United States believed in the concept of preventive war. Anyone who did should be in an insane asylum. Mikoyan said that some years ago there were people who advocated this, though they were not in the Government. As for the present, the Vice President was right.

The Vice President said he spoke for the President and the Government in asserting that the United States had no aggressive intentions. He did want to emphasize one point. While there was disagreement with the President and with Secretary Dulles -- and people like Lippman criticized them -- and while we welcomed all this as a means of getting the best policies, there was in the Senate and the House of Representatives overwhelming support of the present foreign policy leadership. He wanted to emphasize that this did not indicate inflexibility. Our policy appeared inflexible but this was not the case. In the case of Berlin, which appeared to us as unilateral probing action on the Soviet Union's part, there was unanimous support in the Congress for the position of the President. Mikoyan said that he had felt all this in his talks earlier in the day with trade union leaders such as Reuther and Carey. He felt that at the basis of the problem was American lack of understanding or possibly even distrust of the Soviet position. The Soviets regarded their move as a peaceful action. How could he assure Americans that the Soviets did not want Berlin for themselves? He had tried to impress this on everyone but had apparently not been persuasive enough. The Soviets wanted an end to occupation status. The occupation had been done away with in East Germany and West Germany. It was time to do away with it in Berlin. West Berlin should not remain undefended, it should not go to the GDR, but it should not go to Adenauer either. As an example of one of the problems, in August, Adenauer had held a special meeting in West Berlin. This had been a provocative meeting with speeches against East Germany. When the Arabs had made such speeches with regard to Lebanon, the United States had considered this as indirect aggression. Adenauer's activities in West Berlin had

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been a clear case of indirect aggression. The Soviets wanted West Berlin to be a free city, demilitarized -- with a police force, but no troops. The Americans would say that the Bolsheviks were just being clever; that they wanted to get Allied troops out of Berlin and then pull it gradually into East Germany. This was not the case. How could the Soviets assure us so? Words did not seem to suffice. The Soviet leaders wanted the status of Berlin to be guaranteed by the Great Powers and the two Germanies with complete noninterference in its affairs and with free access to it by all countries. The Four Powers had guaranteed the status of Austria, and this guarantee had been well kept. The Vice President said that we could not reconcile ourselves to any unilateral action. Mikoyan said that for the time being there had been none, and that we should come to agreement. The Vice President remarked that Mikoyan had put the Soviet position forward very effectively. The United States felt strongly that anything that is done must be by agreement. As far as we were concerned, we could not give up responsibility under the Treaty, particularly in view of the expressed will of the people of West Berlin. Mikoyan said that the Soviet Union did not want to free the United States of the responsibility for Berlin. It wanted the freedom of Berlin to rest not on bayonets but on international guarantees. The Vice President replied that the main thing was to reach a mutually acceptable settlement so that we do not arrive in six months at an intolerable position. Mikoyan said that we should try to settle the problem before then. The Vice President said that the German problem itself must be settled before there can be any long-term settlement for Berlin. Mikoyan replied that if this meant settlement on the basis proposed by Adenauer, this was a distant prospect. If it meant settlement on the basis of two German States and a peace treaty, it would be a more imminent prospect. Actually, he had the impression that Adenauer was not interested in the reunification of Germany. He had talked all day long with Adenauer and the latter did not even mention this subject. Adenauer had said that general disarmament would lead to a relaxation of tension. The only point he had made with Mikoyan was that no pressure should be put on the people of East Germany in the sphere of religion. Mikoyan had said that unless religion interfered with politics, there should be no pressure. Mikoyan said he had asked Adenauer why he did not talk to the Germans in East Germany. He had remarked to Adenauer that the latter talked to the Abyssinians but not to his own people.

The Vice President said that they could not settle this problem in their conversation.

What he wanted to emphasize was that there had been people in the USSR who had believed that the United States would become divided and its system would collapse. There had been a similar feeling in the United States about the Soviet Union, that its internal problems were too great, that it was basically weak. Looking forward, we should begin with the assumption that both countries are strong, neither should fear the other. If we approached each other in that spirit, we could settle some of our problems. Mikoyan replied that he wanted to amend the Vice President's remarks. The Soviet Union had never regarded the United States as weak or divided. The Soviet leaders knew the oratorical prowess of the two American political parties. They had always regarded them both as a common part of the American bourgeois system and they knew that the United States was a strong, organized state. They knew the strength of our economy, our monopolies, etc. They were glad that the United States did not underestimate

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their situation. This was no menace. Each country should respect the other and not try to subjugate it. However, in the United Nations American representatives often tried to place the Soviets in an inferior position and demonstrate their weakness. This gave offense to them and gave cause for complaint. Such methods did not settle anything. On the question of outer space, the Soviet Union had wanted to take part in the new committee. But it had had to refuse because the membership imposed by the United States delegation had been unacceptable, even though the committee would only have authority in the scientific field. The net result had been the inclusion of various Latin American countries, who could not do much. With the Soviet Union absent, the only point of their presence would be to raise their hands to vote. This affair had led to new conflict in the United Nations which could very well have been avoided. The United States and the Soviet Union are the only countries with space capabilities. The Soviet Union were not members now. Had they been, they might have demonstrated their cooperation. Even in spheres where it is strong, the Soviet Union was being disregarded. The Soviet leaders had directed their representative to let the United States set up its own committee. Mikoyan was sure that the United States would have done the same thing in the circumstances. If we wanted cooperation, we should not attempt to put each other in a subjugated position. There should be full equality. Mikoyan said he could well imagine that we would not come to agreement immediately. It would be better to postpone agreement and come to some modus vivendi. In the United Nations, the Soviet Union and the United States were meeting as adversaries. What was the point of this? The Soviet Union had its pride, too. The Vice President said he wanted to make the point that settlement cannot involve surrender. Each side must be willing to go half way. Ambassador Thompson said that there was another side to the story about the composition of the outer space committee. Zorin had not objected to the participation of the Latin American countries in the committees. He had wanted to pick specific countries suitable to the Soviet Union as against those put forward by the Latin American themselves. Thus, there was more to the story than Mikoyan had indicated. Mikoyan said that as far as he could recollect, the main problem was that the Soviet Union wanted equality between two sides -- the United States and its allies on one side, the Soviet Union and its allies and with neutral countries, on the other side -- in order that there would be no "dictate."

The Vice President said today's discussion had shown the advantage of such talks.

Mikoyan said that when we get to know each other better there will be a base for contacts at all levels. Anyone, whoever it is, would get the best reception in the Soviet Union. If the Vice President could find the time to visit the Soviet Union he would see for himself that this was true. The Soviets were prepared to compete with the Americans about who received the other better.

The Vice President said that he did want to come to the Soviet Union some day. He had already visited some 50 countries and would like to add the USSR. He had always admired the heroism of the Russian soldiers. Like many Americans, he had found enjoyment in reading Russian literature. Tolstoy was a real favorite of his, especially his novels "War and Peace" and "Anna Karenina". He hoped Mikoyan would not experience some of the hospitality that he had experienced in other countries. Mikoyan said he had read about the Vice President's experiences

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and had admired his courage. The Vice President referred to the remark that he was known as a staunch anti-communist. He said it was true that he disagreed with communist philosophy just as communists disagreed with bourgeois philosophy. However, he had been among the American leaders who had early recognized the strength and progress of the Soviet Union. He had been the first to advocate a broad exchange policy, even before the government had adopted the policy. This could do no harm. It might not settle problems but it would bring about better understanding. About this he was in the same position as the communists but from a bourgeois point of view.

Mikoyan thanked the Vice President for the expeditious manner in which the American Government had settled all matters relating to his visit. He had been made to feel welcome and been received by a very glad attitude on the part of the United States Government. He knew something about the American people since he had traveled in this country for two months on his first visit here. His associates had asked him how he could possibly go to the United States without a bodyguard. He had said that if a bodyguard had been necessary he would not have come. He realized that each state was responsible for whatever happened.

The Vice President said that Mikoyan would find many Armenians in San Francisco. They were among the most progressive people there. They were active in business and engaged in growing grapes; and one of his friends owned one of the best restaurants there. Californians said that Armenians were the toughest people to deal with; that they drove the hardest bargains. Mikoyan said that was probably true of the American Armenians.

Mikoyan said that the Soviet Government was doing the best it could to have everyone meet with the best reception there. This was even true of West Germans. The Soviet leaders were glad that influential Americans were coming to their country and would try to receive them in the best way possible.

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